

USA Implements Treaty to Increase Access for the Impaired to Copyrighted Works

The United States has formally implemented an international treaty that expands access to books and other printed materials for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

In 2013, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) adopted the Marrakesh Treaty, which was prompted by the shortage of books published in a format available to those who are blind or suffer from visual impairments. According to the U.S. Copyright Office, the Marrakesh Treaty requires member nations to implement changes to copyright law to allow easier access to Braille and digital audio files, and to facilitate the exchange of accessible formats across borders. The United States signed the Marrakesh Treaty in 2013, but Congress was required to conform U.S. copyright law to its terms and the Senate needed to provide advice and consent before the country could officially join as a member. After five years of bipartisan review of the Copyright Act and consultation with groups representing the visually impaired, publishers, and libraries, Congress paved the way for its ratification and President Trump signed it.

The United States is now a proud member of 71 countries covered by the Marrakesh Treaty, which amends Section 121 of the Copyright Act to expand the types of covered works, broaden acceptable formats, and enlarge the scope of persons who may benefit by the law.